

Ariel Magazine

Spring 2025 / Volume 1 / #54

אריאל Ariel Ministries



COUNTING THE OMER FROM PASSOVER TO PENTECOST

Plus:

The Kaddish – Mourning Well

Divorce and Remarriage in the Hebrew Bible

Marcheshvan and the Return of the Messiah

Book Review: *Where Was God? Theological Perspectives on the Holocaust*

THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

VOL. 1 & 2

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*Exposition from a
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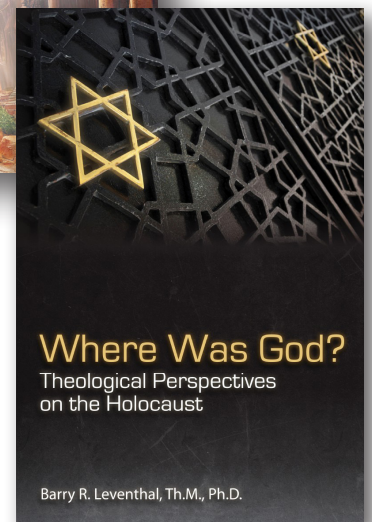


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Purpose Statement

Ariel Ministries exists in order to evangelize Jewish people and to disciple Jewish and Gentile believers through intensive Bible teaching from a Jewish perspective.

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The Passover Promise

Christmas Eve of 2024 is a night my boys and I will never forget. That day, my husband's condition deteriorated beyond what we could manage at home. The hospice agency had exhausted its options, leaving us desperate for help. I reached out to the Durham VA, where my husband had received medical care for over a decade. The on-call hospice doctor was extraordinary. By 5 p.m., an ambulance was on its way.

Just thirty minutes before the medical team arrived, my husband vomited over a liter of blood—his cancer had caused an intestinal obstruction. The depth of our heartbreak in that moment is beyond words.

After we said our goodbyes to Wayne, I held my boys close and declared, "And now, we will celebrate the birth of our Messiah. Because of Him, we can trust that this is not the end." That evening, we prepared duck and red cabbage and worshipped with gratitude, clinging to the unshakable hope that only God can give.

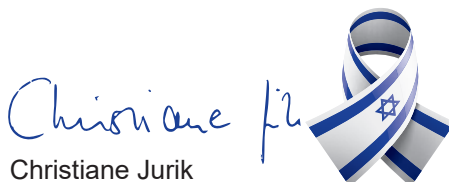
On January 4th, my husband was finally released into glory.

Now, as my boys and I navigate this season of grief, a biblical holy day approaches that carries the same promise as Messiah's birth: Passover. This feast, established in the Mosaic Law, was ultimately fulfilled in the death of Yeshua, the Lamb of God. The paschal lamb was to be male, without spot or blemish, and not a single bone was to be broken. Yeshua met every requirement perfectly. Just as the Exodus generation applied the blood of the lamb in faith, we apply the spotless blood of our Messiah to the "doorposts" of our hearts. We rejoice, for Messiah, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:7). Because of His death, believers will have eternal life (Jn. 6:54).

Wayne—my brilliant, funny, and wonderfully unique husband—believed in this promise. Because of Passover, we know that this separation is only temporary. Yet the pain of death is real, and it would be foolish to deny it. I must allow God to redefine me. I am now an orphan and a widow. But I am also a believer, a mother, the Director of Publications at Ariel Ministries, and Dr. Fruchtenbaum's editor. What else will I become?

I look forward to the adventures God has prepared for me. The One who died for me holds my life in His hands. There is no need to worry about a thing.

I want you to have the same hope. If you are searching for it, ask God to show you the truth (Ps. 139:23-24); and please, reach out to me or anyone at Ariel Ministries—we would love to walk this journey with you.



Christiane Jurik
Editor-in-Chief, Ariel Ministries
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MEET THE TEAM



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Chris and Lisa Savage represent Ariel Ministries in Australia. Based in Victoria, they teach the Scriptures from the Jewish perspective in weekly and bi-monthly classes and day seminars.



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J. I. and Sharon Gabizon represent Ariel Ministries in Canada. The couple established a Messianic congregation in Montreal called Beth Ariel. The branch's multiple projects include translation work and door-to-door evangelism of Jewish homes in Montreal.



Jackie Fierman

Jackie Fierman has been with Ariel Canada since January of 2005, traveling and sharing about the ministry and teaching its material in Canada and the U.S.A.



Ariel India Bakul N. Christian

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Bakul Christian represents Ariel Ministries in India and resides with his wife in Ahmedabad. Using Ariel's extensive teaching material, he expounds the Scriptures from a Messianic Jewish perspective in his home state. He is also responsible for the translations into the Gujarati language.



Ariel Israel Sasha & Lilian Granovsky

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The husband-and-wife team has been representing Ariel Ministries in Israel since October 2009. They are responsible for coordinating the translation of our manuscripts and books into Hebrew and Russian.



Ariel China

For safety issues, we must protect the identity of this branch. Please keep them in your prayers.



Ariel Germany

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Thanks to Manfred Künstler and his wife Hanna, Ariel Ministries has had a presence in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland since 1985. In 2002, the work was passed on to Georg Hagedorn who, eight years later, developed it into a full branch. A dedicated team leads this branch today, responsible for tasks such as translating Ariel materials and organizing conferences.



Ariel Hungary Ivan & Rita Nagy

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Ivan and Rita Nagy represent Ariel Ministries in Hungary. The husband-and-wife team has developed a Come & See website in Hungarian. They host several home Bible study groups, teaching from Ariel's materials. Their goal is to make teachings available to Jewish and Gentile believers and unbelievers in Hungary.



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Paolo and Martina Speciale represent Ariel Ministries in Italy. As a husband-and-wife team, they coordinate the translation of our manuscripts and books into Italian. Their mission is to share the Messianic Jewish perspective throughout Italy through live teaching, social media, and seminars.



Ariel New Zealand

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This branch is led by Johan Jansen van Vuuren, Nigel Christensen, Matthew Lord, Don Thompson, and John Cavanagh. For information about the many activities of this branch, please contact info@ariel.co.nz.



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This branch is devoted to teaching the Word of God from a biblical Jewish perspective in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. They also travel throughout the United States. If you are interested in hosting a teaching session, symposium, or seminar, contact them at dfw@ariel.org.



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David and Danielle Tamala represent Ariel Ministries in the Hawaiian Islands. They founded Ka Hale O Hamashiach, a congregation on Oahu, and have become an invaluable resource for local churches. Among their numerous projects are youth outreach programs and the organization of conferences.

ARIEL REPRESENTATIVES



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Jack Nakashima represents Ariel Ministries in Rock Hill, SC. Previously serving in Israel, he is now available to teach and disciple in the U.S.



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Will Israel Recover from the Trauma of October 7?

Ariel Israel

Since October 7, the most common questions we hear from friends abroad are: How are you? How are the people of Israel? How are the believers coping? We cannot speak for millions; we can share what we personally feel and observe.

The events of October 7 were profoundly traumatic. The original meaning of the word *trauma* is a tear in the tissue. Can the soul be torn? Yes, it can.

The Trauma and Its Effects

We all face difficulties in life, but an event becomes traumatic when its memory spins out of control. The

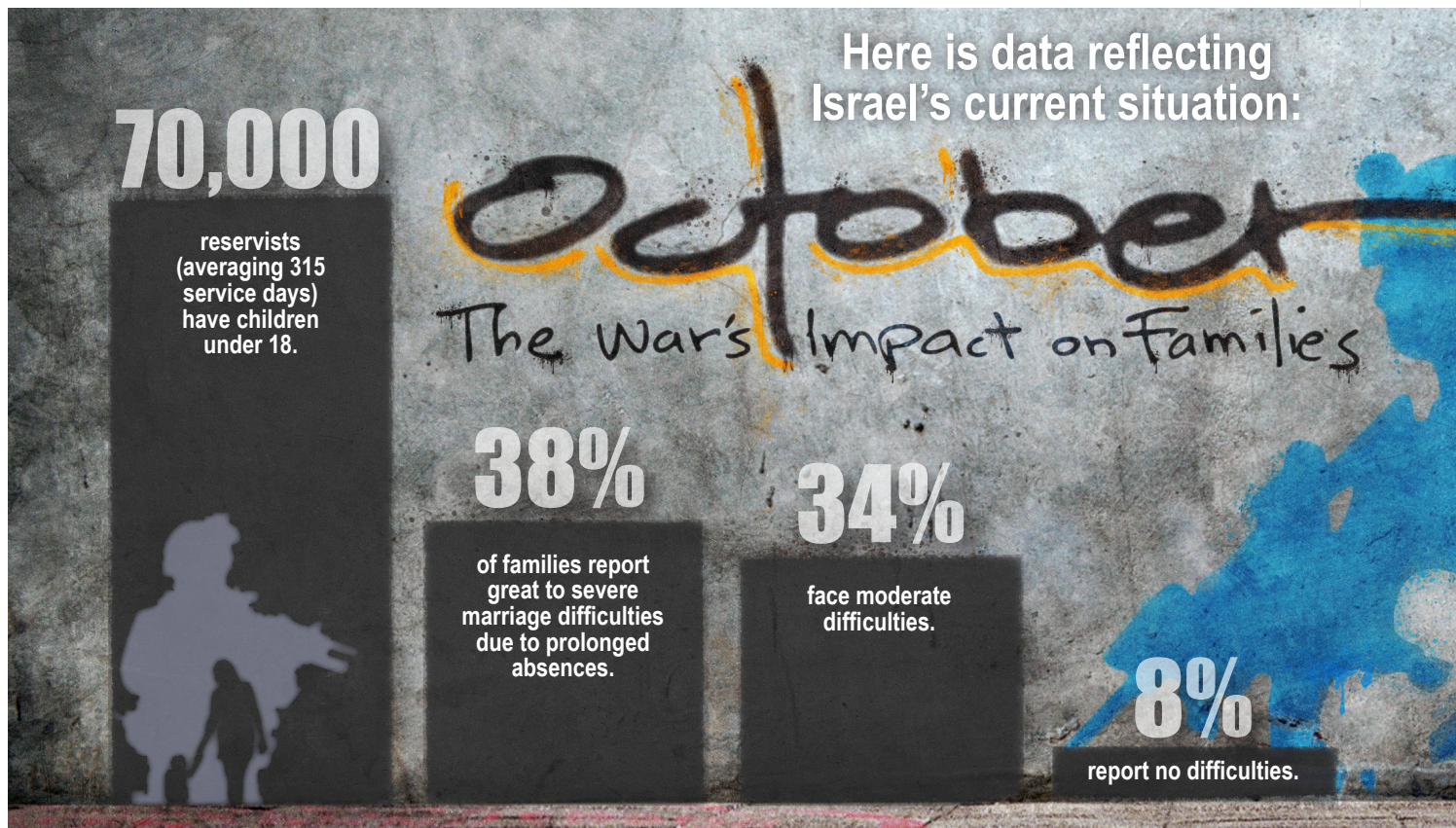
person relives the event constantly, feeling as though it is happening again, here and now. As a nation, we are no doubt traumatized—especially when 101 of our “soul’s cells” are still in captivity. We wake up to October 7 and go to sleep with it on our minds. We work, breathe, invest, and make decisions—all in the shadow of October 7.

What was torn in Israel’s soul that day was the ability to trust. We lost any sense of security and the hope that coexistence and peace were possible. We lost the belief that Israel’s leaders would do everything possible to protect and rescue their own people. Finally, we lost the

confidence that all sectors of society would share the burdens of war. These are just a few examples. Israel will bear scars and memories of abandonment, defenselessness, betrayal, and loneliness.

Responses to the Attacks

Will all people respond to the attacks on October 7 with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD)? It depends on how deeply they were involved in the event and its aftermaths. Passive observers respond differently from active fighters. As after the Holocaust, some have closed their hearts to God forever. Others have turned to Him.



Many people are numb. They suppress their feelings, fearing that if they allow themselves to feel, they will not cope with life's daily demands. They walk, talk, and work as if wearing an armor.

For believers, however, the perspective is different: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day... For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Physically and emotionally, we believers share the same pain. We are incredibly tired, hurt, and burnt out.

The artwork below depicts statistics on the impact of the war on families, highlighting that 90% of

families require emotional support. Believers are no exception. Fathers struggle with PTSD, while mothers carry heavy emotional burdens. Families have suffered. Yet, God is our refuge. In Him, we find strength and hope. "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has bestowed on us... Surely they are my people... In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them" (Isa. 63:7-9).

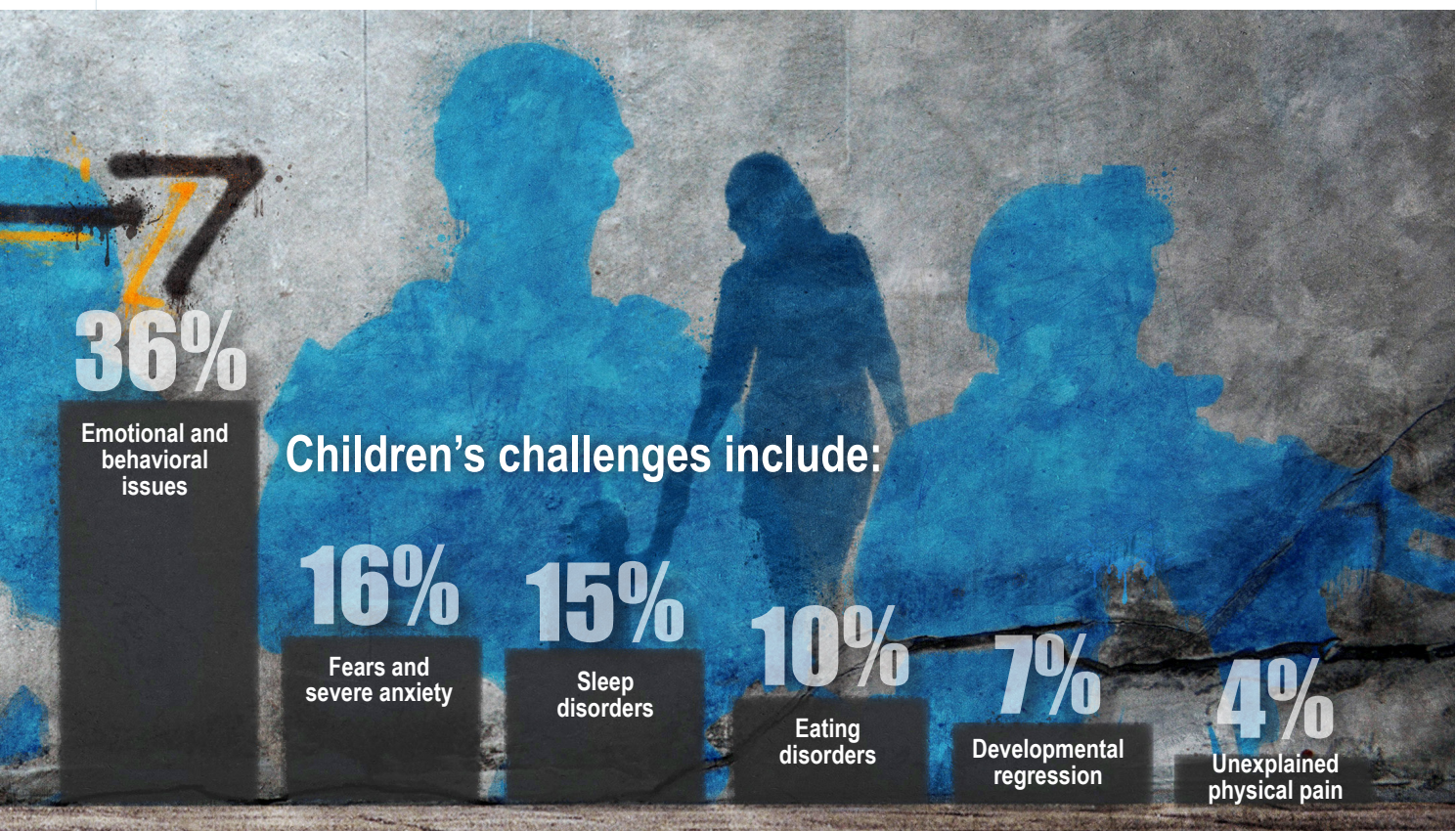
As believers, we hold on to God's promises that Israel's future is rooted in YHWH's faithfulness. As Psalm 48 and countless other Scriptures affirm, the city of God, Jerusalem, will be restored and bear a new name in the Messianic Age: *Jehovah*

Shammah—"YHWH is there" (Ezek. 48:35). The city will carry this name because the Messiah—YHWH Himself—will reign from there.

Through faith and resilience, Israel will rise, scarred but not broken—trusting in the One who redeems and restores.

How Can You Help?

First of all—thank you! Your prayers and support mean everything. Yet, the war is far from over, and its effects will linger for a long time. Please keep praying. If you feel led to help financially, you can contribute to counseling work that supports marriages and equips parents to raise the next generation of believers in Israel (<https://www.ariel.org/donate>).





Home Office

Saying Farewell and Welcoming New Leadership at Ariel Ministries

The year 2024 marked a season of important transitions within Ariel Ministries. As we reflect on these changes, we recognize the lasting impact of Wayne Wideman's nearly seven years of faithful service as Home Office Manager.

Wayne brought a rich legacy of ministry experience to Ariel Ministries, including over 40 years of ministry with the Swaziland Evangelical Bible College, where he served as Academic Dean and Adjunct Professor. His dedication to teaching and ministry has touched lives across continents. Wayne's kind and gentle spirit, servant leadership, and Messiah-like character have left an indelible mark on Ariel Ministries as well. The entire team wishes Wayne and his wife, Pam, many joyful years of well-deserved retirement.

Wayne's successor, Danny Price II, joined Ariel Ministries as Director of Corporate Office in December and has already made a significant impact during his first three months.

With 29 years of ministry experience, including 15 years in church administration, Danny brings exceptional leadership and organizational skills to the team. He holds a Master of Divinity from Logsdon Seminary – Hardin Simmons University, along with certifications in Church Administration and Fundraising.

Before joining Ariel Ministries, Danny served as Associate Pastor at Life Point Church in Helotes, Texas. His prior roles include Operations Pastor at Cross Mountain Church and Lead Pastor at The Hills Church in San Antonio.

Danny and his wife, Michelle, have been married for 22 years and have three children—Aidan, Joshua, and Gab.

With his extensive experience, passion for ministry, and commitment to growth, Danny has already proven to be a valuable addition to the Ariel Ministries team. We eagerly anticipate the continued growth and impact of Ariel Ministries under his leadership.



From left to right: Danny Price II, Wayne Wideman, Dr. Tim Sigler



Dr. Sigler's Course on Hermeneutics and Bible Study Methods

Dr. Sigler said his goal is not to "fill Dr. Fruchtenbaum's shoes" but to "walk in his footsteps" in faithfully teaching the Word of God. Dr. Sigler is doing just that, as is evident from student feedback from his newest online course, "Interpretive Foundations: Hermeneutics and Bible Study Methods (FND 104)."

Thirty-eight students are currently taking the course, and their feedback has been very positive. Here are a few examples:

"I am enjoying Interpretive Foundations, taught by Dr. Sigler. From the opening devotional content by Dr. Cooper to the readings and assignments from Professors Zuck, Thomas, and others, this course offers exceptional instruction on hermeneutics, the basis for good exegesis. I praise God for this excellent resource to partake of meat, not just milk."

— Rebecca K., Iowa

"Give diligence to present yourself approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth' (2 Tim. 2:15, ASV). This verse encapsulates the reason I am taking this course. I want to correctly interpret and apply Scripture. I am especially enjoying learning about the history of Scripture interpretation in this course, both Rabbinic and Christian approaches."

— Anne C., Texas

"The course clearly presents a Messianic perspective on biblical interpretation, which I really enjoy. It also addresses problematic areas related to non-literal, excessively allegorical approaches that have dominated Church history. I also appreciate learning about rabbinic approaches to interpretation. I am thankful for the emphasis on the literal-grammatical-historical approach to interpreting Scripture."

— Nigel C., New Zealand

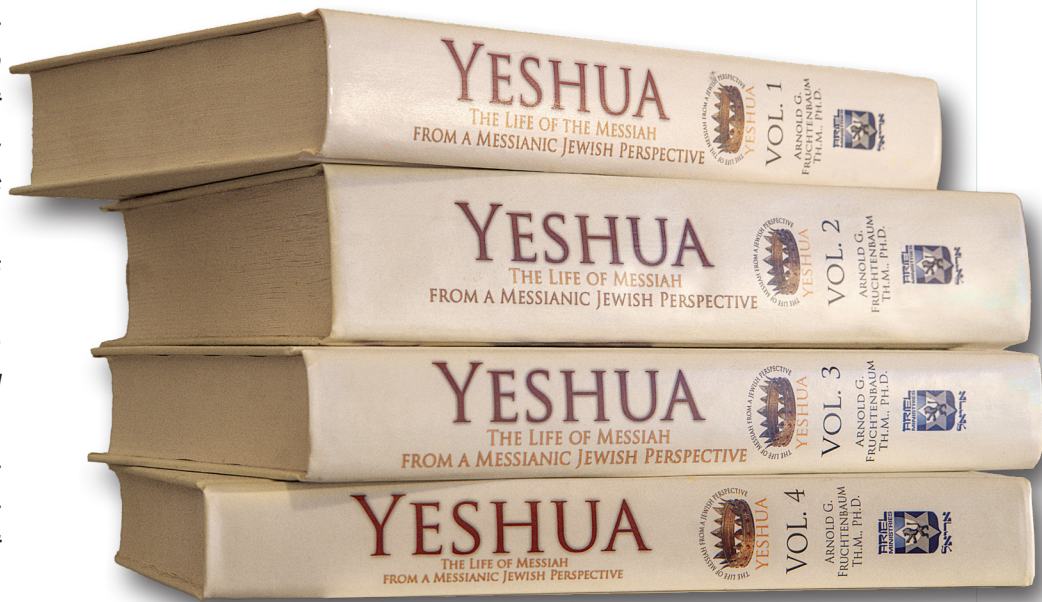
The course culminates in writing a final interpretive project, an exegetical paper on a passage from the book of Ephesians. An exegetical paper is a formal, organized, grammatical-historical, verse-by-verse research study on a certain passage of Scripture.

Students will learn many skills in this course. We wish Dr. Sigler continued success as he develops additional online courses for Ariel College of the Bible and Messianic Jewish Studies.



Messianic Jewish Faith Study Program

Ariel Hungary

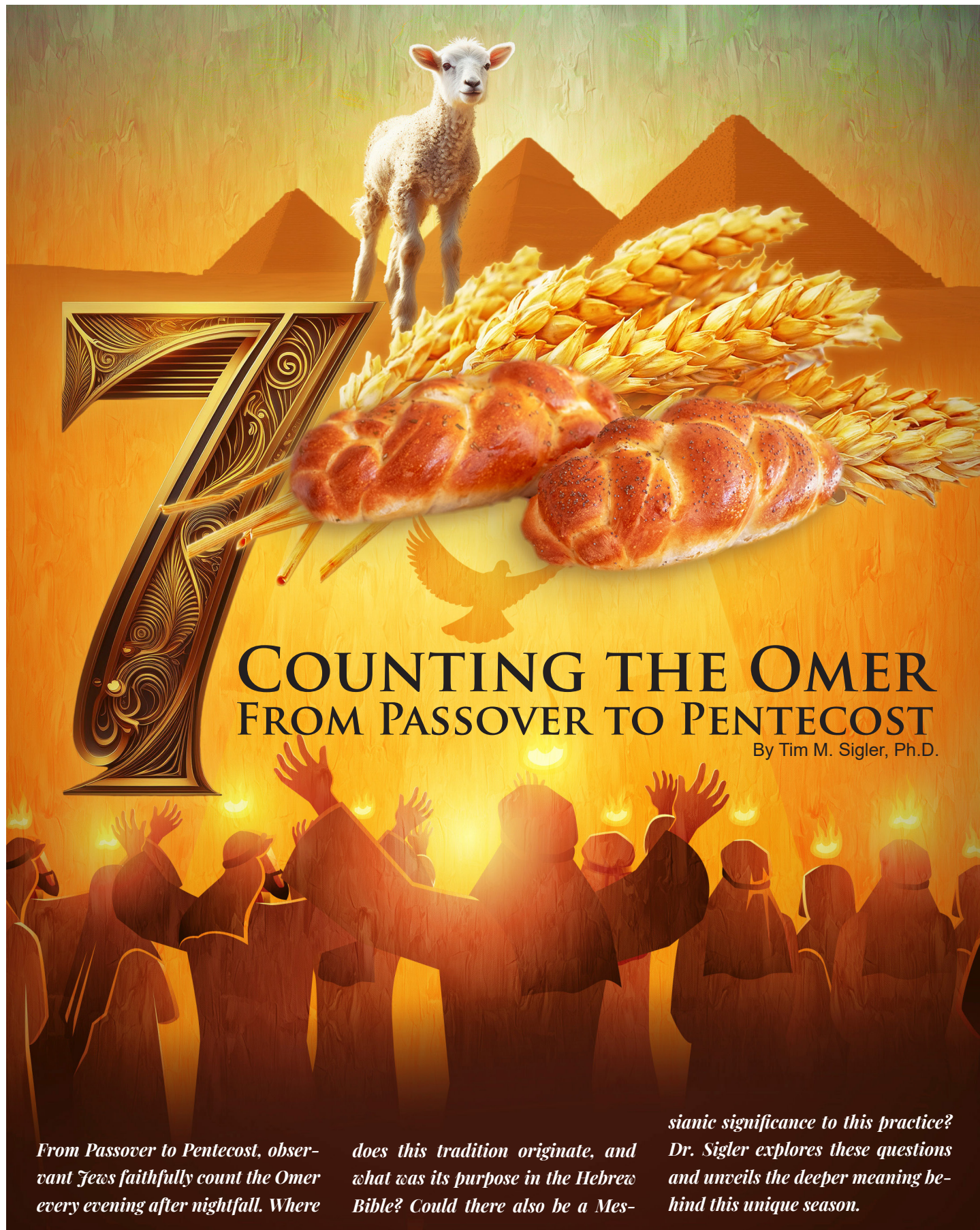


Our long-term project, which began in 2023 and continues into 2025, focuses on teaching the *Life of Messiah* series in a highly detailed manner, alongside *Theology and Antisemitism*. Interestingly, we have found that these two series often complement each other, enriching the overall learning experience for our students.

We are pleased to have welcomed several new attendees to this study group. Among them is a Jewish man who has not yet come to faith in Yeshua but is open to exploring the Scriptures through our Jewish approach. Another attendee, a believer from a Reformed church, has shown great enthusiasm for learning about the first-century Jewish context of the Gospels.

We are also excited to share that our outreach efforts are bearing fruit. An old Jewish friend and Holocaust survivor, whom we visit regularly, recently asked about the meaning of justification. This provided a natural opportunity for an evangelistic conversation.

Additionally, we continue reading the Bible with other Jewish friends. One woman shared that she now reads the Scriptures regularly, starting over each time she finishes. Ten years ago, when we first began reading the Bible together, it was her first time to even open the Scriptures. Witnessing the transformative power of God's Word in her life—and how it continues to draw her closer to Him—has been a tremendous blessing.



COUNTING THE OMER FROM PASSOVER TO PENTECOST

By Tim M. Sigler, Ph.D.

From Passover to Pentecost, observant Jews faithfully count the Omer every evening after nightfall. Where

does this tradition originate, and what was its purpose in the Hebrew Bible? Could there also be a Mes-

sianic significance to this practice? Dr. Sigler explores these questions and unveils the deeper meaning behind this unique season.



When many Christians hear the words “Day of Pentecost,” their minds often go directly to Acts 2. However, it’s not like there was only one day of Pentecost in the Bible. Pentecost was originally commanded as an annual celebration, known as the Feast of Weeks, around 1400 B.C., when the Israelites entered the Promised Land.

Leviticus 23 outlines seven such annually appointed times (*mo’edim*), four in the spring and three in the fall. Of these seven, three required a pil-

grimage to the central sanctuary, later identified as Jerusalem (Deut. 16:16; 2 Sam. 5:6-10; Ezek. 5:5). These pilgrim feasts included the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread (*Hag Hamatzot*), which is associated with the Passover (*Pesach*); the Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*), observed seven weeks later; and the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (*Sukkot*). The first two occur in the spring, while the last takes place in the fall. In His mercy, God did not require pilgrimages during the heat of summer or in the cold of winter.

Finally, while six of these *mo’edim* are feasts, the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) is a solemn fast.

Central to this article’s topic is the period beginning with Passover and culminating in Pentecost. Known in Scripture as “the counting of the Omer,” this period is commanded in Leviticus 23:15-16. These verses specify counting seven weeks, starting from the day after the Sabbath during the Passover week, leading to the Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot* or Pentecost).

The Number Seven

Reading Israel’s feast chapter (Lev. 23), one quickly sees the importance of the number seven, as the first appointed time, the Sabbath (*Shabbat*), comes around every seven days. Based on the creation week (Gen. 1–2, Ex. 20:9-11), the Sabbath is so significant that it is celebrated weekly and sets the pattern for each of the *mo’edim*. However, as the following examples show, the number seven held deep significance beyond the feasts and permeated Jewish thought and culture:





7 There were seven days in the creation week (Gen. 1-2).

7 Animals had to be at least seven days old before they were allowed for use in the sacrificial system (Ex. 22:30).

7 Seven species of crops were listed as native to the Promised Land (Deut. 8:8).

7 Naaman, the Syrian commander, had to bathe seven times in the Jordan River to be healed of leprosy (2 Kgs. 5:10).

7 Joshua was commanded to march around Jericho for seven days (then seven times on the seventh day), and then seven priests blew seven trumpets before the city walls came tumbling down (Josh. 6:3-4).

Seven often signifies completion, fullness, or perfection. George W. Knight observes the many ways that the number is employed throughout the book of Revelation: "seven churches (1:4), seven stars (2:1), seven lamps (4:5), seven seals (5:1), seven angels with seven trumpets

(8:2), seven thunders (10:4), a beast with seven heads (13:1), seven vials or bowls (17:1), and seven kings (17:10)."¹ To this list can be added the seven benedictions or promises of blessing (Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). "By using this number, John declared that God will bring about His perfect judgment in the end time. All believers will participate in [Messiah's] full and complete victory."²

Seven Biblical Commands

With the significance of the number seven established, we now turn to the focus of this article: the counting of the Omer. Scripture outlines seven key elements for observing this sacred season, which begins during the week of Passover and culminates at Pentecost:

1. Counting seven Sabbaths (Lev. 23:15-16; Deut. 16:9)
2. Rejoicing in thanksgiving before the Lord (Deut. 16:10-12)
3. Making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Ex. 23:14-17; Deut. 16:16)

4. Waving two loaves of leavened bread (Lev. 23:17, 20)
5. Sacrificing grain, libation, sin, peace, and burnt offerings (Lev. 23:18-19)
6. Making a proclamation (Lev. 23:21)
7. Leaving corners of fields for the poor and the alien (Lev. 23:22)

Counting Seven Weeks

According to Leviticus 23:15-16, the counting of the Omer was to begin on the Feast of First Fruits, the day after the Sabbath during the week of Passover. This now largely uncelebrated feast commemorated the barley harvest in ancient Israel.

Regarding the Omer period, the Israelites were commanded, "You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf [*omer* in Hebrew] of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete



¹ George W. Knight, *The Illustrated Guide to Bible Customs & Curiosities* (Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbor Books, 2007), p. 249.

² Ibid.



Sabbaths. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall present a new grain [wheat] offering to the Lord” (Lev. 23:15-16).

While the sheaf of the barley harvest is not waved in the Tabernacle or Temple today, the practice of counting the Omer is still dutifully observed in Jewish tradition. A ceremonial countdown is recited in observant Jewish homes, marking each day of the Omer period. The traditional counting formula is as follows: “Today is the x day, which is y weeks and z days in the Omer” (with the appropriate values for x, y, and z supplied for each day).

Counting the Omer in the Book of Acts

In the first century, Jewish pilgrims from all over the Diaspora traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate this feast (Acts 2:9-11), counting the Omer as they traveled. After seven weeks, the fiftieth day marked the culmination of the season. This fiftieth day coincided with the beginning of the wheat harvest in Israel and was known in Greek as *Pentecost*. There must have been plenty of excitement as day fifty approached. The people knew that a special wave offering of two loaves of leavened bread would be presented in the Temple (Lev. 23:17, 20), that various sacrifices would be made (Lev. 23:18-19), and

that a proclamation was in order (Lev. 23:21). Yet no one could have foreseen the extraordinary events that would unfold in the context of Acts 2.

Among the pilgrims were Yeshua’s disciples. Imagine their excitement: “Today is the 49th day, which is 6 weeks and 6 days in the *omer*. Tomorrow will be Shavuot!” To this day, it is traditional to stay up all night on the eve of Shavuot studying from each book in the Torah. Perhaps the disciples were doing something like this (Acts 2:1). Perhaps, in New Year’s Eve fashion, they counted down to the new day: “Three, two, one—*mazel tov!* It’s Shavuot!” “But wait... What’s happening? We didn’t expect this!” The *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit) came and empowered Yeshua’s followers, fulfilling His promise in Acts 1:8.

Acts 2:1-2 recounts, “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a noise like a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.” You know the rest of the story. Jerusalem was ablaze with the newly empowered messengers of the good news of the resurrected Messiah. Peter preached a bold sermon proclaiming mankind’s guilt and alienation from God, followed by the offer of forgiveness of sins and eternal life. He proclaimed Yeshua, the

One who died as a substitute sacrifice and rose victoriously from the grave, just as Scripture foretold. This year’s proclamation was anything but traditional—it was life-changing. Peter delivered the announcement (Acts 2:14), and three thousand pilgrims in Jerusalem put their faith in Messiah!

The Day Had “Fully” Come

The Greek word translated as “had come” or “had fully come” in Acts 2:1 is pronounced *soom-play-rah’-ō* and means “to fulfill completely”—either *in time*, as in the fulfillment of a prophecy, or *in space*, as in filling the hull of a ship. A number of English translations emphasize this complete fulfillment with the phrase “had fully come.” This rendering more helpfully implies the sense of anticipation that the counting of the Omer period would have generated as the community awaited the fulfillment of the season culminating with the Day of Pentecost.

Luke recounts how Yeshua “presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a *period of forty days* and speaking of things regarding the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). But how would the disciples have known that Yeshua ascended on day number forty? Yeshua rose from the dead on the first day of the week—Sunday (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:9;



Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1, 19)—also known as “the day after the Sabbath” or “the Day of First Fruits” (*Yom Habikkurim*) during the Passover week (Lev. 23:15). The Jewish community had been faithfully counting the Omer period since that day. Because of this counting, everyone would have been aware of the precise day of this significant event.

Two Leavened Loaves

An unusual element in the celebration of Pentecost involves the command to offer two loaves baked with leaven. As Dr. Fruchtenbaum explains, “When used symbolically in Scripture, leaven is a symbol of sin. The reason God required leaven to be used during Shavuot was because those represented by this offering were sinners.”³ The good news of Messiah’s sacrifice, proven acceptable by His resurrection on the Day of First Fruits, was then to be proclaimed with the powerful enablement of the promised Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. This message

was to be preached to two groups—Jews and Gentiles—like the two leavened loaves. Both groups, as sinful human beings, stand in need of God’s saving grace provided through Messiah. This message was preached to the Jew first (Rom. 1:16) and then proclaimed from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Perhaps this season of Shavuot can take on special significance for us as believers today when we realize that this agricultural festival represents more than one kind of harvest. While it commemorated the wheat harvest in ancient Israel, it can be celebrated today as a commemoration of the harvest of souls from that first Shavuot after Messiah’s resurrection—etched in our minds as the greatest Pentecost ever—fifty days after “He has risen, just as He said” (Mt. 28:6).



Tim M. Sigler (Ph.D.) serves as the CEO of Ariel Ministries, entrusted by Dr. Fruchtenbaum to lead the organization into its next generation of gospel witness and doctrinal faithfulness. A

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³ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Feasts and Fasts of Israel: Their Historic and Prophetic Significance* (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2019), p. 115.





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The Kaddish – Mourning Well

By Dan Strull

THE KADDISH PRAYER, CENTRAL TO JEWISH MOURNING TRADITIONS, OFFERS PROFOUND INSIGHTS INTO NAVIGATING GRIEF AND LOSS. ROOTED IN CENTURIES-OLD PRACTICE, IT PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK FOR SHIFTING FOCUS FROM SORROW AND DESPAIR TO HOPE AND RENEWAL IN GOD'S ETERNAL PROMISES. FOR BELIEVERS IN MESSIAH YESHUA, THE PRAYER DEEPENS SOLACE THROUGH THE SANCTIFICATION OF GOD'S NAME AND THE ANTICIPATION OF HIS COMING KINGDOM



Mourning has become a way of life for my Jewish people. Aftershocks of October 7, 2023, reverberate daily—news of a hostage’s body being recovered, another too-young IDF soldier killed in action, former allies pressuring Israel to accept a two-state solution, new rebukes and sanctions from the international community, and the growing wave of antisemitism on campuses and cities around the world.

Israel’s current circumstances are unique, but the experience of mourning is not. Each of us knows the grief of loss and the despair it can breed. Many of us dread the approach of Hanukkah, Christmas, and the New Year because loved ones who made them memorable have been torn from us.

Death and mourning are like dark threads woven into our lives. Removing them is not possible, but keeping them from diminishing the rest of life is. The question is, “How?” The Jewish tradition of reciting the Mourner’s Kaddish offers helpful insight.

The Name “Kaddish”

The name *Kaddish* is related to the Hebrew word meaning “holy” or “sanctified.” It comes to us in Aramaic because that was the *lingua franca* of its time.

The origins of the Mourner’s Kaddish are obscure. During Mishnaic times (early first through early third century A.D.¹), the core phrase of the Kaddish—“May His great name be blessed forever and for all eter-

nity”—was the congregation’s or students’ response following a sermon or Torah study. Today’s Kaddish dates to at least the 13th century and is still recited in Aramaic, except for the final phrase, which reiterates in Hebrew the concluding Aramaic phrase.

Timing

Reciting Kaddish permeates the communal Jewish mourning process. Kaddish is recited at the graveside during interment and throughout the seven days of “sitting *shiva*,” during which family and friends gather at the mourner’s home for consolation and corporate prayer. Over the next eleven months, the deceased’s adult children recite Kaddish daily and thereafter annually at the *yahrzeit* (“anniversary”) of the death.

All in the community who are mourning or marking the anniversary of a relative’s death stand to recite Kaddish during Shabbat, *Yom Kippur*, and several other Jewish holiday services. Each instance surrounds the bereaved with support because reciting Kaddish requires a *minyan*, a quorum of ten adults. United, the community affirms the hopes expressed in Kaddish with a fourfold “Let us say, Amen.”

Looking Ahead, Up, and Beyond

As a child, the connection of the Kaddish to death was plain to me. All four of my grandparents passed before I turned eleven. I remember sitting *shiva* and feeling the weight

of grief among those gathered to console us. The image of my parents and other mourners standing to recite Kaddish during Shabbat and holiday services remains with me still.

Although the Mourner’s Kaddish anchors the Jewish response to loss, neither death nor mourning are mentioned in the prayer. Rather, Kaddish draws our attention away from the grave—from temporal loss to eternal hope. Each section of Kaddish nurtures hope by encouraging us to look in the right direction: ahead, up, and beyond.

Grief’s dark clouds can overwhelm us when they are allowed to fill our vision. The opening section of Kaddish directs our gaze away from death. It causes us to look ahead to a greater, more enduring reality—God’s rule and reign restored to our broken world.

Glorified and sanctified be God’s great name throughout the world which He has created according to His will.

May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and during your days,

and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon;

and say, Amen.

May His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity.

In this section, we assert our desire for the glorification and sanctification of God’s name through the establishment of His kingdom on

¹ Tzvee Zahavy, “The Mishnaic Period,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), Vol. III, p. 1083.



earth. Similarly, Messiah Yeshua tied God's glory and kingdom together when teaching His disciples to pray, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:9). At the establishment of God's kingdom, the nations of the world, including all those now at war with God's people Israel, will finally honor and praise the one true God for who He is. In this way, God's name is sanctified, set apart. God will be glorified!

The Kaddish teaches us to grieve well by turning our gaze ahead to God's glory and kingdom, "during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon."

Without mentioning death or mourning, Kaddish sets grief's somber threads within the brighter, more lasting tapestry of the hope of God's coming kingdom. The center and concluding sections of Kaddish deepen our understanding of this hope.

Unbound Vision of God's Worthiness

Death often raises doubts about God's character. This is especially so when a loss comes unexpectedly or under tragic circumstances. My wife and I lost our three surviving parents within an 18-month period. We grieved each loss, but it was the unexpected passing of her mother that was hardest to accept. In the Jewish community, when hearing of a death, we recite the *Dayan Ha Emet* blessing, "Blessed are You,

Lord, our God, King of the universe, the True Judge (*Dayan Ha Emet*). The bereaved also recite it at the funeral as a black ribbon worn by each family member is torn, symbolizing their grief. Yet, even as we affirm God's perfect justice, our confidence in Him can waver.

Like a cosmic black hole, doubt in God's reliability draws us deeper into grief. Kaddish counteracts this descent by exerting a greater force—an unbound vision of God's worthiness. Kaddish helps us mourn well by looking up.

Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, adored and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, beyond all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are ever spoken in the world; and say, Amen.

Kaddish originally served as a doxology of praise following a teaching from God's Word. All of us who have engaged in the in-depth study of Scripture know how easily we can slip into a detached, academic attitude. Kaddish countered this tendency by reorienting students to the study's proper goal—glimpsing the inexpressible magnitude of God's worthiness. The rabbi wanted his students to share in this exalted goal!

The Center Section of the Kaddish

The center section begins with four sets of synonyms, each expressing affirmation of an object's value. Here, the object of this geyser of

words is "the name of the Holy One." The phrase "the name" represents God in His entirety. "The Holy One" is a favorite rabbinic synonym for God's ineffable name, YHWH. This description embodies God's uniqueness, uncreated nature, infinite righteousness, omniscience, omnipresence, justice, love, grace, power, sovereignty, mercy, covenant faithfulness, and more!

The opening words of the center section spill over one another, competing for a suitable appreciation of God's worthiness. Yet it admits failure! So great is God's character that appropriate praise exceeds our ability because it is "beyond all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are ever spoken in the world." When it comes to God's character, "We just can't say enough about the guy!" He deserves praise that is out of this world.

Kaddish helps us grieve well by drawing our gaze heavenward. Despite our doubts and confusion, we find ourselves meditating on God's inexpressible worthiness. Reading aloud the cascade of adulations, "Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted," only to pronounce them inadequate, brings a surprising comfort. However great our doubts, the weight of God's worthiness is infinitely greater.

In our grief, we look up from the grave to see God's perfection and realize our struggle to trust Him is worth it. Like Job, we say, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless, I will argue my ways before Him" (Job 13:15).

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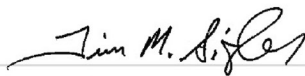
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The Final Section

The final section of Kaddish provides the ultimate remedy for grief's darkest thread—hopelessness. From the moment our first parents chose to “be like God,” death has ruled over humanity. As a result, life is short in years and long on suffering. We rage against this because down deep we know it is not supposed to be this way (Eccles. 3:11)! Left unbound, this thread of hopelessness spins into a shroud of despair. Hopelessness mutes our joy. Nothing satisfies. Simple perseverance is gone, and clear thinking is impossible.

Thankfully the finale of Kaddish delivers the antidote to this toxic form of grief:

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen. He who creates peace in His celestial heights, may He create peace for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

The “abundant peace” (in Hebrew, *Shalom*) yearned for in Kaddish is infinitely more than the absence of conflict. This heaven-sent *Shalom* is the wholeness of being at every level. *Shalom* in its fullness means prosperity, success, welfare, health, completeness, soundness, and welfare. For us and all Israel, this abundant *Shalom* represents life as it should be, unimpeded by death.

Kaddish ends by reminding us that death need not be the end of our story. Humanity craves and vainly pursues escape from death through man-made religions and, more re-

cently, the transhumanist delusion of avoiding death by downloading one's consciousness to a computer. Yet, escape is available! Our escape comes *from heaven*, the “home” of life's Author! Reciting Kaddish helps us mourn well by focusing us beyond death to the abundant peace and life God provides. It speaks hope to our anguished souls.

Hope Realized in Messiah

The tradition of reciting Kaddish can be an effective aid to mourning well. It is a shield against the kind of grief that overwhelms us in the face of death's unrelenting presence. Each section gently shifts our gaze away from the grave and up to a more enduring reality, the restoration of God's rule, worthiness, and life over our death-bound world. Glimpsing this unimaginable future fortifies our souls as we wait for its consummation.

By God's grace, the hope Mourner's Kaddish offers is realized in Messiah Yeshua. He is the King whose rule will bring the sanctification of God's name: “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Yeshua. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end” (Lk. 1:31-33). *And let us say, Amen.*

Messiah Yeshua is the embodiment of God's worthiness: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him

all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (Col. 1:15-17). *And let us say, Amen.*

Messiah Yeshua is the Giver of abundant peace and life: “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day” (Jn. 6:40). *And let us say, Amen.*



Dan Strull, born in New York City and raised in a Reform Jewish home, came to faith in Messiah Yeshua in 1975 while living in Aspen, Colorado. After marrying Cynthia in 1977, they served with the North Africa Mission near Philadelphia, providing support to missionaries. Dan graduated *summa cum laude* from Columbia International University in 1983 with a B.A. in Bible and a missions emphasis. He then served as a frontline evangelist with Jews for Jesus in Chicago. In 1987, he became the pastor of the Olive Tree Congregation in suburban Chicago, where he faithfully ministered for 35 years. Upon retiring, Dan and Cynthia relocated to Spartanburg, SC, where he continues his service to the Lord as a board member of Life In Messiah Ministries. His sermons and writings remain accessible at www.olive-tree.org.

Reciting Kaddish for Marta Haendler

By Christiane Jurik, M.A.





In 1992, German artist Gunter Demnig initiated a project that continues to this day: the Stolperstein initiative. A Stolperstein is a ten-centimeter (3.9-inch) concrete cube topped with a brass plate inscribed with the name and life details of individuals who were victims of Nazi extermination or persecution. The German term Stolperstein translates literally to “stumbling stone,” but it also carries a metaphorical meaning—serving as a “stumbling block” to remind passersby of the tragic past.

Recently, Dr. Fruchtenbaum attended the laying of a Stolperstein for Marta Franzisca Haendler (née Katz), who was deported to Theresienstadt in 1943 and later murdered. During the ceremony, he recited Kaddish in her memory. The event, organized by believers in Messiah Yeshua who now reside in Marta’s former home in Berlin, marked the first and only memorial service she has ever received.

When I learned that Dr. Fruchtenbaum would be attending the ceremony, I asked my brother, Tobias Neumann, to take photos. All the images featured in this article are courtesy of him.





DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

PART I

By Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Ph.D., Th.M.



In this two-part article, Dr. Fruchtenbaum examines the issue of divorce and remarriage. The first part addresses divorce and remarriage in the Hebrew Bible, exploring its principles and practices. The second part, to be published in the Summer 2025 edition of *Ariel Magazine*, will analyze divorce and remarriage in the New Testament, focusing on how its principles and laws apply to believers today.



In the latter part of chapter 3 of the book of Revelation, the apostle John addresses the congregation in Laodicea, a wealthy ancient city in Asia Minor, now Turkey. The very name “Laodicea” is significant, as it highlights the core issue of that congregation. The name means “people are ruling,” and it suggests a church that allows societal and social pressures to dictate its theology. As a result, this church becomes *neither hot nor cold* but *lukewarm* (Rev. 3:16).

This lukewarm state leads the Messiah to declare that He is about to spew this congregation out of His mouth because it no longer allows the Spirit to rule through the Word of God. Instead of holding the Bible as the final authority, such a church submits to societal pressures, shaping its theology to conform to the culture. In doing so, the exegesis of the Word is sacrificed for conformity.

The Laodicean tendency characterizes the church of our own age, where apostasy and compromise have become prevalent. While we often attribute such trends to non-evangelical groups, the issue also affects evangelicals.

Allowing theology to be shaped by society is a dangerous tendency, and its effects are evident in contemporary issues within the church. One such issue is divorce and remarriage. Increasingly, the church allows societal norms and pressures to shape its views on these matters. Passages that were once clear and unequivocal suddenly become “difficult” or “less clear” because we seek to justify practices that Scripture dis-

allows while still maintaining a spiritual veneer. This reflects a troubling compromise, where the authority of Scripture is undermined to accommodate cultural trends.

If we believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, then the words of the Bible are of utmost importance. They must be understood and applied exactly as the Holy Spirit conveyed them. There can be no compromise.

This study will examine the issue of divorce and remarriage in two parts. The first part addresses the topic in the Hebrew Bible, while the second part analyzes the New Testament perspective.

Divorce and Remarriage in the Hebrew Bible

When addressing the topic of divorce and remarriage in the Hebrew

Bible, it is essential to examine the stipulations provided under the Mosaic Law. This law permitted divorce under certain conditions, specifically on the grounds of *sexual incompatibility* and *religious incompatibility*. However, as this study will demonstrate, God’s attitude toward divorce was consistently negative, emphasizing reconciliation and the sanctity of marriage above all.

Sexual Incompatibility

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 serves as the primary passage in the Hebrew Bible addressing the issues of divorce and remarriage on the basis of sexual incompatibility:

“When a man takes a wife, and marries her, then it shall be, if she find no favor in his eyes, because he has found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her



a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. ²And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. ³And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, who took her to be his wife; ⁴her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before YHWH: and you shall not cause the land to sin, which YHWH your God gives you for an inheritance.

In the Hebrew text, verses 1-4 form a single, complex sentence presenting a hypothetical situation with five "if" clauses. If all five conditions are met, the "then" clause provides the governing Mosaic Law.

The First "If"

The first "if" appears in verse 1: *When [or if] a man takes a wife and marries her.* The verb "takes" underscores the man's determination to embrace the responsibilities of marriage. The Hebrew term for "marries" here is *baal*, which differs from the usual word for marriage (*lakach*). *Baal* means "to rule over," "to possess," or "to own," emphasizing the man's readiness to assume the roles of leadership, authority, and headship within the marriage. Thus, the first condition is that a man enters marriage with the intention of fulfilling the responsibilities inherent in this covenant relationship.

The Second "If"

The second "if" in the passage is stated as follows: *If she find no fa-*

vor in his eyes, because he has found some unseemly thing in her. This clause introduces the possibility of dissatisfaction arising after the marriage ceremony. The woman no longer finds favor in her husband's eyes, meaning that despite her efforts, she cannot gain his approval or affection. This dissatisfaction stems from an aspect of her personality that consistently repels him.

The phrase "unseemly thing" is rendered differently across translations. The Hebrew term for "unseemly," *ervat*, means "nakedness," "shame," or "indecent." While it carries sexual connotations, it does not refer to adultery, since adultery under Mosaic Law was not grounds for divorce but rather for execution (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22-23).

Once the adulterer or adulteress was executed, the remaining spouse would be widowed and therefore free to remarry. In contrast, *ervat* suggests a lesser form of sexual impropriety or defect—something that causes significant disruption within the marriage but does not rise to the level of adultery.

Thus, the issue described in Deuteronomy 24:1 does not pertain to adultery but rather to sexual incompatibility or a lack of sexual fulfillment within the marriage. Because of this incompatibility, the husband may decide to divorce his wife.

The Third "If"

The husband's dissatisfaction with his wife leads to the third "if" in verse 1: *[if he] write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand,*





and send her out of his house. Divorce under Mosaic Law required a specific legal process. A formal bill of divorcement had to be issued. It served two essential purposes:

1. **Protecting the Woman from Accusations of Adultery:** If the divorced woman remarried and was accused of adultery, she could present the bill of divorcement as legal proof of her status, demonstrating that her first marriage had been lawfully dissolved.
2. **Preventing Hastiness by the Husband:** The requirement to write a bill of divorcement ensured that the husband acted deliberately. He had to take the time to draft the document, which acted as a safeguard against impulsive or rash decisions.

Thus, the bill of divorcement provided legal protections for the woman while also promoting accountability in the process of divorce.

The Fourth “If”

The fourth “if,” found in Deuteronomy 24:2, states: *And when [or if] she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s wife.* This clause establishes that if a divorce has been finalized—meaning the bill was written, delivered to the woman, and she was sent away—the marriage is legally and permanently severed. Divorce, therefore, marks a complete dissolution of the marital relationship.

Three key terms in the passage underscore this principle:

1. **Another man’s wife:** This phrase indicates that the divorced woman has the legal right to remarry and become the spouse of someone else.
2. **Latter husband:** This phrase refers to her second husband, signifying the legitimacy of the new marital bond.
3. **Former husband:** This phrase refers to her first husband, whose marital ties to her have been severed.

These phrases make it clear that once a divorce is enacted, the prior marriage is regarded as terminated. Furthermore, the passage explicitly allows for remarriage in this context, as the divorced woman who marries another man is not considered an adulteress. This establishes that, under Mosaic Law, divorce not only severed the marital bond but also granted the divorced woman the right to enter into a new marriage.

The Fifth “If”

The fifth “if,” found in Deuteronomy 24:3, states: *And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, who took her to be his wife.* This clause addresses the termination of the second marriage, which could occur in one of two ways:

1. **Divorce:** If the second husband becomes dissatisfied with her, he may initiate a divorce following the same three-step process: writing a bill of divorcement, delivering

it to her, and sending her away from his house.

2. **Death:** If the second husband dies, she becomes a widow.

In either case—whether the second marriage ends in divorce or the husband’s death—the law specified in verse 4 applies: *her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife.* This establishes a prohibition against reconciliation with the first husband under any circumstances. Once the woman has entered into a second marriage, she becomes *unclean* in relation to the first husband. This uncleanness does not imply moral corruption but instead signifies that she is permanently untouchable to the first husband.

The law offers her two options: She may reconcile with the second husband, if he is still living, or she may marry a third husband. However, returning to the first husband is explicitly forbidden. If she were to do so, verse 4 warns: *you shall not cause the land to sin.* Allowing such a reconciliation would pollute the land, as it violates the sanctity of the marital system established under Mosaic Law.

Jeremiah 3:1a makes the same point: *They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man’s, will he return unto her again? will not that land be greatly polluted?* This rhetorical question reinforces the prohibition against returning to a former spouse after a second marriage, emphasizing that doing so would pollute the land and invite God’s judgment.

Key Conclusions from Deuteronomy 24

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 assumes that divorce is permitted but does not prescribe or mandate it. The preference, as implied, is always toward reconciliation. Even in cases of sexual incompatibility, divorce is neither commanded nor encouraged.

The Mosaic Law acknowledged the practice of divorce because it was already prevalent in society. However, it did not create or advocate for divorce. Instead, it sought to regulate the practice, ensuring it occurred within defined parameters to prevent misuse or abuse.

Reconciliation is the priority, and divorce is presented as a last resort. The Hebrew Bible makes clear that divorce should not be considered until every effort for reconciliation has been exhausted. Only when all possibilities of resolving the marital conflict have failed does the law tolerate divorce.

The Mosaic Law's provisions for divorce reflect God's accommodation of human frailty while upholding a standard of sanctity for marriage. The regulations sought to protect the vulnerable, particularly women, and to preserve the moral and spiritual integrity of the nation.

In summary, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 presents divorce in the Hebrew Bible as a concession to human weakness rather than an ideal. While permitted under specific conditions, it was carefully regulated to encourage reconciliation and to minimize harm to both individuals and society.

Divorce — A One-Way Process

Under Mosaic Law, divorce was exclusively the prerogative of the husband. The law provided no legal avenue for a woman to divorce her husband. Divorce was strictly a one-way process: A man could divorce his wife, but a wife could not divorce her husband.

This exclusivity is reinforced by the two Hebrew terms used for “divorce,” both of which highlight the husband’s authority in this matter:

1. “The sending away of a wife”: This phrase, derived from the two Hebrew words *shalach* (“to send away”) and *ishshāh* (“wife”), underscores that divorce was the act of a husband sending his wife away. Notably, there is no corresponding term for “the sending away of a husband” because this was not a legal option under Mosaic Law. Examples of this phrase can be found in Deuteronomy 22:19, 29; and Malachi 2:16.
2. “To be thrust out” or “thrown out”: The Hebrew term here is *garash*, meaning “to drive out,” “to expel,” “to cast out,” or “to divorce.” This term is always used in the feminine form, signifying that it applied exclusively to women. The masculine form is never used because Mosaic Law did not permit the husband to be “thrust out.” Examples of this term appear in Leviticus 21:7, 14; 22:13; and Numbers 30:9.

These linguistic nuances reflect the legal system under the Mosaic Covenant, where the authority in marital dissolution rested entirely with the husband.

Restrictions

The Mosaic Law placed specific restrictions on divorce in certain situations, prohibiting men from divorcing their wives under particular circumstances. The first such case is seduction. Deuteronomy 22:28-29 mandated that a man who seduced a virgin must marry her. Following this marriage, he was forbidden from ever divorcing her: *he may not put her away all his days*. This ensured lifelong responsibility for the woman, stemming from his earlier misconduct.

The second circumstance is the case of false accusations. Deuteronomy 22:13-19 shows that if a man falsely accused his wife of unfaithfulness and she was proven innocent through the prescribed legal process, he could not divorce her in the future: *she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days*. This rule served as a safeguard for the woman, holding the man accountable for his baseless accusations.

These two exceptions underscore that, although divorce was predominantly the husband’s decision, the Mosaic Law imposed certain limits to ensure justice and protect women in vulnerable situations.

Instructions Concerning Priests

The Mosaic Law includes specific regulations concerning the priest-



hood, with strict standards regarding marriage and divorce.

A priest was prohibited from marrying a divorcee under any circumstances. While a divorced woman, as described in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, was allowed to marry another Jewish man, that man could not belong to the tribe of Levi. This is seen in Leviticus 21:7, which states: *They shall not take a woman who is a harlot, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy unto his God.* Similarly, verse 14 emphasizes: *A widow, or one divorced, or a profane woman, a harlot, these shall he not take; but a virgin of his own people shall he take to wife.* While divorcees could remarry within other tribes of Israel, members of the Levitical tribe were expressly forbidden from marrying them.

However, the Mosaic Law provides specific provisions for a divorced daughter of a priest. Leviticus 22:13 states: *But if a priest's daughter be*

a widow, or divorced, and have no child, and be returned unto her father's house, as in her youth, she shall eat of her father's bread: but there shall no stranger eat thereof. A divorced daughter of a priest could return to her father's household and resume partaking in the privileges of the priestly family, such as eating the special bread designated for the Levites. This regulation demonstrates that while divorce carried social and legal implications, it did not exclude a Levitical daughter from certain priestly rights.

A Divorcee and Her Vows

Numbers 30:9-12 provides additional instructions concerning divorcees and their obligations to fulfill vows:

⁹But the vow of a widow, or of her that is divorced, even every thing wherewith she has bound her soul, she shall stand against her. ¹⁰And if she vowed in her husband's house, or bound her soul by a bond with an oath, ¹¹and her hus-

band heard it, and held his peace at her, and disallowed her not; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she bound her soul shall stand. ¹²But if her husband made them null and void in the day that he heard them, then whatsoever proceeded out of her lips concerning her vows, or concerning the bond of her soul, shall not stand: her husband has made them void; and YHWH will forgive her.

This passage addresses the situation where a wife makes a vow during her marriage. If the husband hears the vow and does not object, the vow becomes binding. However, if the husband nullifies the vow on the day he hears it, it becomes void, and the woman is released from her obligation, with YHWH forgiving her.

The key point here is the status of the vows after a divorce. If the woman is divorced and her husband did not release her from her vows while they were married, those vows re-



main binding. A divorced woman is still obligated to fulfill any vows she made to YHWH before the divorce unless her husband explicitly nullified them during the marriage.

Religious Incompatibility

Thus far, it has been established that under Mosaic Law, sexual incompatibility was the key ground for divorce. Divorce was not recommended, commanded, or encouraged—it was merely permitted. If a divorce was to occur, it had to adhere to the specific legal procedures prescribed in the Torah.

Later in the Hebrew Scriptures, religious incompatibility emerges as a second ground for divorce. This is outlined in two significant passages: Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 13:23–31. These texts describe a period after the return from Babylonian captivity when Jewish men intermarried with Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, and other Gentiles who had settled in the land during the Jewish exile. The children of these unions often followed the pagan practices of their Gentile mothers, worshiping foreign gods instead of the God of Israel. This religious incompatibility introduced idolatry into Jewish homes, undermining the purity of Israel's worship and covenant relationship with YHWH. In response, God's command, issued through Ezra and Nehemiah, required Jewish men to divorce their Gentile wives who had not embraced the worship of the God of Israel. This directive was not motivated by ethnicity but by the wives' continued idolatrous practices, which

threatened the spiritual integrity of Israel. Thus, religious incompatibility became a valid ground for divorce in the Hebrew Bible, alongside sexual incompatibility.

God's Attitude Toward Divorce

The command for divorce in cases of religious incompatibility in the Hebrew Bible reflects an exception rather than God's original will. His perspective on divorce is explicitly revealed in Malachi 2:13–16:

¹³And this again ye do: ye cover the altar of YHWH with tears, with weeping, and with sighing, inasmuch that he regards not the offering any more, neither receives it with good will at your hand.

¹⁴Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because YHWH has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion, and the wife of your covenant. ¹⁵And did he not make one, although he had the residue of the Spirit? And wherefore one? He sought a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. ¹⁶For I hate putting away, says YHWH, the God of Israel, and him that covers his garment with violence, says YHWH of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

Although divorce was tolerated under certain circumstances, it was never YHWH's primary will or desire for His people. The breaking of the marriage covenant is an act of

treachery that God detests.

Conclusion

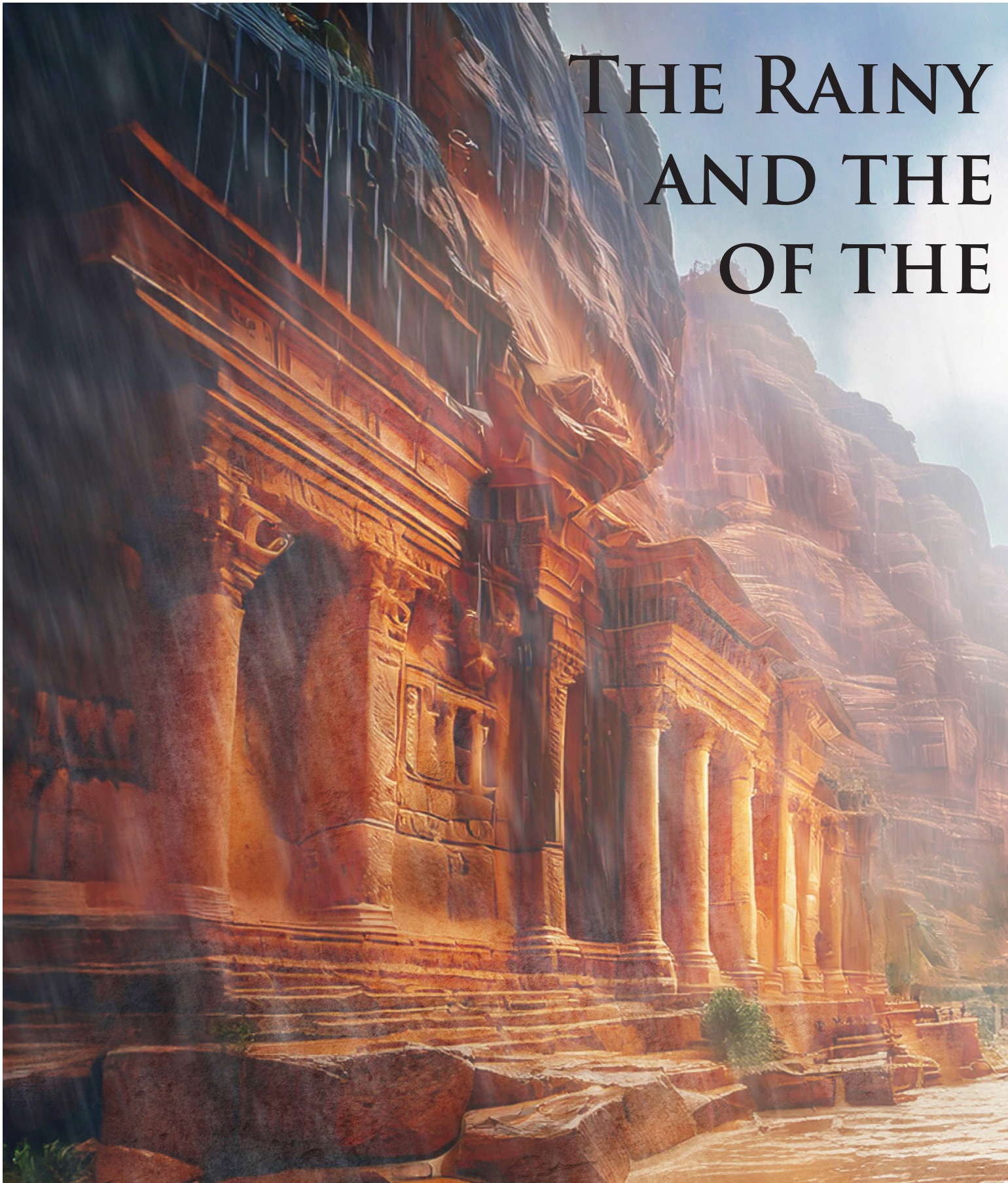
The Mosaic Law allowed divorce on two grounds: sexual incompatibility and religious incompatibility. In both cases, divorce fully severed the marriage, making remarriage permissible.

However, when we turn to the New Testament, we will see that these two grounds for divorce are negated. They will no longer be applicable to New Testament believers. Instead, two new grounds for divorce will be introduced, along with conditions for remarriage. Understanding the Old Testament context is essential to grasp the distinctions and principles that will emerge in the New Testament discussion of divorce and remarriage.



Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum obtained a B.A. degree from Cedarville University in Hebrew and Hellenistics, a Th.M. degree from Dallas Theological Seminary in Hebrew and Old Testament Studies, and a Ph.D. degree from New York University upon the completion of his dissertation, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*. He is the Founding Director of Ariel Ministries and a much-respected biblical authority in evangelical and Messianic circles.

THE RAINY AND THE OF THE





MONTH RETURN MESSIAH

By Matthew Bryce Ervin

The Scriptures often make reference to months, revealing deeper meanings tied to Jewish history, culture, and theology. The eighth month, known as Bul in ancient times and later called Marcheshvan, is particularly significant as it marks the start of the rainy season in Israel. Exploring the origins and implications of this month sheds light on its possible connection to biblical prophecy, Jewish tradition, and the anticipation of the Messianic Age.



Months in the Bible are almost always referred to by their ordinal numbers: the first month, the second month, and so on. A notable exception to that rule is the eighth month, which is also called *Bul* in 1 Kings 6:38. *Bul* (בּוּל) derives from the same root as *mabbul* (מַבּוּל), the name for Noah's flood (e.g., Gen. 7:6). Flavius Josephus, the famed Jewish historian, even taught that the flood started in the eighth month.¹ This would seem to contradict Genesis 7:11, where it is stated that the flood came "in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month" (NASB 1995). But according to Josephus, this was a different ordering based on how the Hebrews arranged their calendar in Egypt.² Regardless of whether or not Josephus was correct, *Bul* is a month of rain and moisture.

The Jerusalem Talmud tells us that when the Jews returned from exile in Babylon, they brought Babylonian names for the months along with them.³ According to ancient sources such as the Babylonian Talmud⁴ and Josephus,⁵ the eighth month was named *Marcheshvan* (later shortened to *Cheshvan*). The meaning of *Marcheshvan* is unclear. It is possible that the name derives from Akkadian (Babylonian and Assyrian). The "w" and "m" sounds are interchangeable in Akkadian. So perhaps *Marcheshvan* broken down into the words *merach* ("month") and *shwan* ("eight") could be rendered as *warh* and *shman*, which corresponds to the Hebrew *yerach shemini*, the "eighth month." This is not an especially strong answer, though. It

both makes assumptions and is not in harmony with the meaning of the name *Bul*.

The Meaning of *Marcheshvan*

There is also a tradition that *Marcheshvan* means the "bitter month," either since no feast days or holidays occur in it or because the matriarch Sarah died in this month.⁶ In this view, *mar* (מַר), which typically means "bitter" in Hebrew, is taken to be an appellation added to describe the month. By itself, *Cheshvan* would then be best understood as a Hebrew construction based on a word that was used in Babylon for "month." However, there is nothing in early Jewish literature that strongly connects *Marcheshvan* to *bitterness*. In contrast, as we saw with Josephus, there is a solid connection in early Jewish literature between the rainy eighth month and *Marcheshvan*.

I favor the view that when it comes to *Marcheshvan*, *mar* actually means "drop," as it does in Isaiah 40:15.⁷ Thus, *Marcheshvan* is the "month of a droplet," signifying the first rains. This is the most simple and straightforward way to understand the name, and this view is in harmony with the meaning of the month's older name, *Bul*.

Regardless, the eighth month (October-November) coincides with the beginning of the rainy season in the Holy Land. Even so, rain was not guaranteed. The people prayed especially for rain during the eighth month. It is taught in the Mishnah that the people should ask for rain on the third or on the seventh of

Marcheshvan.⁸ And on the seventh of *Marcheshvan* in Israel today, prayers for rain are added to the *Amida*, the "standing" prayer.

Marcheshvan and Messianic Prophecy

Since the post-exilic names for the months originally came from Babylon, they do little to help us understand the Bible. *Marcheshvan* is arguably the sole exception. That's because once we are mindful of the fact that the eighth month is the ideal time for rain, it can help us to better understand some passages that mention the month.

Perhaps the best example comes from Zechariah 1:1: "In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, saying." The date given to us in this verse creates a bookend of sorts with the prophecy at the end of the book, in 14:16-19, where during the Messianic Kingdom the nations of the earth will be required to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles and to worship the King, Yahweh of armies. Rain will be withheld from any nation that fails to make the pilgrimage. This idea of bookending conforms well with the pattern we see in Zechariah, where the beginning of the book anticipates the end, matching it in several respects.

We also find in Zechariah 1:1 that the prophet dated his book to Darius I, which is a stark reminder that the people were under the power of Persia and that they weren't allowed





a king of their own. However, at the end of Zechariah, we see that it is the divine, Messianic King who will rule over all the nations of the earth (14:9).

On a broader note, at the opening of the book, the Lord told the people of Israel to return to Him so that He may return to them (1:3); and at the close of the book, it is the other nations of the earth who will have to turn to the Lord and travel to Jerusalem to worship the Messiah (14:16-19; cf. 8:20-23).

On a final point of conformity—though much more could be said—the purpose of Zechariah’s eight night visions was to encourage the people to rebuild the temple (1:7–6:8). This would ultimately lead to the coming of the “Branch,” the Messiah, who would build yet another temple when

He returns (6:12-13). The overarching theme of Zechariah, then, is that the prophet stood with one foot in his present time while the other stood in the glorious future that awaits Israel.

The date at the opening of his book is part of that theme—one that is often overlooked.

Rain is a cardinal example of something that the Lord provides people with as a blessing (e.g., Lev. 26:4; Deut. 28:12; 1 Kgs. 8:35; 18:1; Joel 2:23; Zech. 10:1; Acts 14:17; Jas. 5:18) or withholds as a curse (e.g., Deut. 28:24; 1 Kgs. 8:35; 17:1; 2 Chr. 7:13; Jas. 5:17; Rev. 11:6). Yeshua spoke of rain as one of God’s universal blessings, both on the just and the unjust (Mt. 5:45).

The Lord’s message that first came to Zechariah during the autumnal, rainy month suggests that it

was given in anticipation of the Messianic Age—when the Lord Yeshua will reign from Jerusalem!

¹ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1.80.

² Ibid., 1.80-81.

³ y. *Rosh Hashanah* 1:2

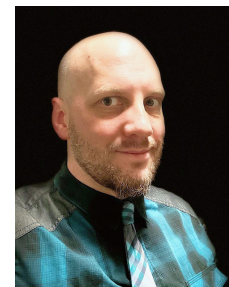
⁴ E.g., b. *Rosh Hashanah* 7a.

⁵ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1.80.

⁶ *Esther Rabbah* 7:11 states that Sarah died in *Marcheshvan*. However, Jewish views on the date of Sarah’s death differ, with many through the centuries teaching that she died in *Nissan*, soon after the *Akedah*, the “binding” of Isaac.

⁷ Even though it is just one word, *mar* has two distinct entries in the lexicons: Strong’s number 4751 for the meaning “bitter” and number 4752 for “a drop.” The underlying meaning is related to *distillation*, which speaks to something that is bitter or to something that is a distilled liquid—like rainwater.

⁸ m. *Ta’anit* 1:3. The discrepancy comes from Rabban Gamliel, who taught that the people should wait until the seventh to give the last Jewish pilgrim returning from observing the Feast of Tabernacles a few more dry days to reach the Euphrates River.



Matthew Bryce Ervin, MA, MTS, is the lead pastor at Oakfield-Alabama Baptist Church in Oakfield, New York. He serves as an advising professor for Tyndale Theological Seminary and is the director of Apple Eye, a Bible-teaching ministry. He and his wife have two sons. His newest book is *The Divine Messenger: Appearances of the Son of God in the Old Testament* (Wipf & Stock, 2023).



Book Review

Now Is the Time to Read *Where Was God? Theological Perspectives on the Holocaust*

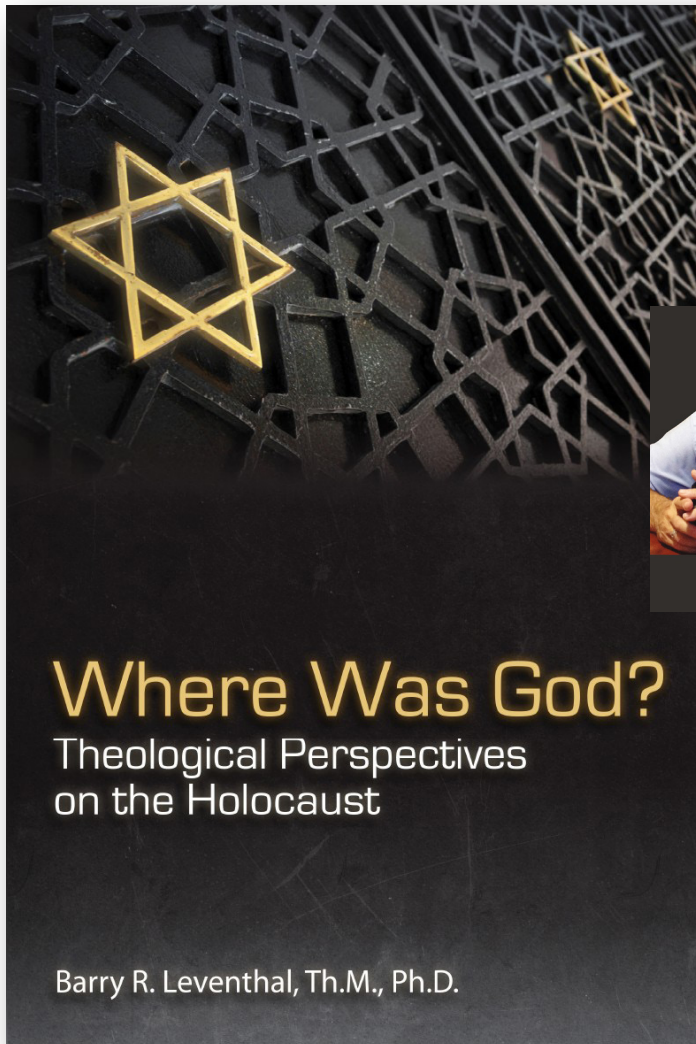
By Rich Robinson

We invited Rich Robinson from Jews for Jesus to review Dr. Barry Leventhal's book, *Where Was God? Theological Perspectives on the Holocaust*. Rich brings a unique perspective to this review, as he approaches the subject from a slightly different theological standpoint than the author. Despite their differences, Rich emphatically endorses the book, asserting it is a must-read for all.

The late Barry Leventhal (1943–2022) was a Jewish believer in Jesus. He served with Ariel Ministries and taught at Dallas Theological Seminary, Trinity School for Ministry (Ambridge, PA) and Southern Evangelical Seminary (Matthews, NC). This book is based on his doctoral dissertation of 1982, with edits for readability by Christiane Jurik and some updates to the footnotes and bibliography.

It is no longer 1982. But the topic of this book is as critical as ever, as the generation of Holocaust survivors is fading out and especially in light of the post-October 7 world we now live in. One need only read Sinclair Lewis's prescient 1935 novel *It Can't Happen Here*—along with Jonathan Greenblatt's 2022 book *It Could Happen Here*—to realize that the Holocaust is not, and may never be, “behind” us.

When speaking of the Holocaust, one almost feels as though one is walking on holy ground. What can one say? And how should one say it? The answer to the first question is, “A





great deal!”—and the first chapter of *Where Was God?* is devoted to giving the perspectives of a large swath of Jewish voices on the subject of God and the Holocaust. Leventhal divides these Jewish views into “traditional,” “radical,” and “moderate” perspectives. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book. It is immensely helpful to see how Jewish thinkers have responded, even when their response is to say that there can be no response. I am not sure that I have seen a compilation like this before.

The next three chapters focus on the biblical covenants with Israel; Israel’s election, remnant, and satanic adversary; and, finally, a biblical theodicy—that is, how to think about God in relation to the existence of evil and the Holocaust in particular. These chapters are written from a distinctly dispensational perspective. While Judaism has no “truly authoritative” answers to the Holocaust, writes Leventhal, “conservative evangelicals... alone can give an authoritative answer to the Holocaust, not necessarily a complete answer (leaving room for ‘mystery’ within the revelation of God) but certainly an authoritative answer.”¹

Form and Tone of the Book

Let me comment on the form and tone of the book along with making some remarks on the content. A doctoral dissertation is not a discursive

essay, and like many dissertations, this one is written dispassionately and even clinically. Numerous outlines for one point or another are given throughout the book, suggesting that perhaps some of the material began as a classroom syllabus or as study notes. I found that, given the weighty topic of the book, some of the observations came across as “pat” or overly simplified. Particularly is this the case in the statement that conservative evangelicals “alone” can give an authoritative answer to the questions the Holocaust raises. While the authority in view is the Bible, it is not clear that the biblical texts lend themselves to cut-and-dried thinking on the topic.

For instance, Leventhal examines the biblical covenants and the doctrine of election, concluding that the Holocaust is the result of the outworking of God’s covenant curses to a disobedient nation:

[God] continues to raise up pagan nations as His instruments of chastisement during her years of dispersion (cf. Lev. 26:33, 36-45; Deut. 28:64-68; 30:1-10). It is with tremendous difficulty that those committed to biblical truth must affirm that Nazi Germany was one of those pagan nations.²

At the same time, however, he lays the blame for the Holocaust and other Jewish tragedies on satanic opposition to God, His people, and His plans. These two reasons,

however, stand in tension with one another.

For example, if a secular Jew today is the target of antisemitic violence, is that because he as an individual has violated God’s covenant? When the mass murder at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, took place, should we see that as God’s covenant judgment? What shall we say about the Hamas attack of October 7? Is it possible to see these events as primarily or solely as the result of the satanic attempt to destroy the Jewish people? If Leventhal wishes to defend Jewish tragedies as the results of covenantal disobedience, it will take more than he has provided here and with a tone more in keeping with the “pathos” of the Old Testament prophets that Heschel wrote about (and which Leventhal acknowledges). It is helpful, however, to note that some Jewish thinkers—not many—have agreed with Leventhal’s conclusions here.

Even some remarks about God’s preservation of the Jewish people come across as clinical:

If he can wipe her [the Jewish nation] off the face of the earth, Messiah cannot come back at His second advent. Without a covenant people to receive His covenant promises, the program of God comes to a grinding halt.³

One wishes to say, in place of speaking about God’s “program,” that without a covenant people,

¹ Barry R. Leventhal, *Where Was God? Theological Perspectives on the Holocaust* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2023), pp. 101-102.

² Ibid., p. 146.

³ Ibid., p. 219.



God's love falls empty into the universe and His promised faithfulness dissolves into a valley of tears. But it is not the nature of doctoral dissertations to speak that way.

Conclusion

Is *Where Was God?* helpful to read? Absolutely. First, it gives the view of a Jewish follower of Jesus. The note and bibliography point us to other views from other Messianic Jews on the subject of God and the Holocaust. It would be a worthwhile project to compile all such views and discuss them in depth, much as Leventhal has done for mainstream Jewish views in chapter 1.

Second, it gives a snapshot of the apologetics of a previous generation. Boomers, of which Leventhal and this reviewer are a part, liked our rational arguments, our reasoning, our logic. In some ways *Where Was God?* reads like Josh McDowell's *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, a staple of boomer-era apologetics, with its numerous primary source quotes and to-the-point argumentation.

We live in different times. Rational arguments often give way to the search for a narrative that makes sense. Older responses to ethical conundrums—such as the destruction of the Canaanites—no longer make sense. Is it sufficient to say that “God commanded their destruction” and leave it at that? Maybe at one time. Today's generation asks more probing questions.

Now is the time to read this book. Then see how you can go beyond

it. For my part, I have found a few thoughts helpful. First, at the risk of sounding callous or worse, when it is said that God should have prevented the Holocaust and other evils, I think to myself: *Who said that is God's job description?* For I note that God as a loving father is one image of many in Scripture. Another is that of God as commanding an army. Along with being recipients of God's covenantal love, we are also fighters against evil. The response to the Holocaust, to October 7, and to other tragedies may well be not to blame God but to blame other people and to take our place partnering with God as fighters against that human evil. This, of course, is also one of the classic responses to human suffering. But it is also a scriptural response. How does one fight against evil in the middle of a death camp? Perhaps just by being there. By carrying on until one can carry on no longer, can no longer feel anything, can no longer think anything. That, to me, is one part of a response—not an *answer* but a *response*.

Second, I often return to a picture I first heard about in a book by Edith Schaeffer called *The Tapestry*. Her image, as I recall it now many years later, is that of the back side of a tapestry: chaotic, without meaning, without sense. That, she suggested, is how we view life now. The front side of the tapestry, in its full artistic glory and coherence, is how God views life. One day, we hope in faith, we will be enabled to see things from God's vantage point.

Whether I would find these sufficient responses if I were in a death camp or the victim of a Hamas attack, I do not know. But they help me at the moment.

I write this in 2024. We are forty-two years out from when Barry Leventhal wrote his thesis, essentially a biblical generation. We need to read this book, read others like it, and think deeply about what we can say for new times and new challenges. Even life before October 7, 2023, to quote Bob Dylan, “seems like a long time ago, long before the stars were torn down.”⁴

⁴ From the song *Brownsville Girl*.



Rich Robinson grew up in Brooklyn, New York, in a Reform Jewish home. His journey to faith in Jesus began during his college years at Syracuse University, culminating in 1973 after several years of spiritual searching and exploration. Since 1978, Rich has served with Jews for Jesus, working as a missionary across multiple North American branches. He was also a pianist and songwriter with the music team *The Liberated Wailing Wall*.

Currently, Rich serves as a senior researcher in San Francisco, focusing on writing, editing, and researching topics related to the Bible, Jesus, and Jewish culture. He is the author of *Christ in the Sabbath* and *The Day Jesus Did Tikkun Olam: Jewish Values and the New Testament* and co-author of *Christ in the Feast of Pentecost*.

Rich holds an MDiv from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (1978) and a PhD in biblical studies and hermeneutics from Westminster Theological Seminary (1993)—but don't hold that against him! His “calling card” to attend Westminster was none other than renowned Hebrew grammarian Bruce Waltke, who taught for many years at Dallas Theological Seminary.

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THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL

Mottel Baleston Weeks 3 – 5 July 14 – August 1
Through Moses at Sinai, God gave the Jewish people instructions to observe seven annual festivals as a continual remembrance of God's faithfulness and provision. These set appointments provide for us a picture of Messiah's first and second comings and a wonderful tool for sharing the gospel with Jewish friends.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Richard Hill Week 5 July 28 - August 1
This important study helps in mastering principles of the spiritual life and spiritual warfare. The course examines the roles of the Holy Spirit, the new nature, as well as the world, the flesh, and the devil in the believer's life.

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This series investigates the biblical evidence for immortality, the question of the intermediate state of the body and soul, the Old and New Testament contributions to these topics, the place of the dead (e.g., hell and heaven), and a discussion about the eternal state of believers and unbelievers.

INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM

Tim Sigler Weeks 7 – 8 August 11 - 22
Explore the fascinating world of modern Rabbinic Judaism, its practices, beliefs, culture, and divisions as well as its differences with Messianic Judaism and Christianity.

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This study identifies and traces the Messianic Jewish community historically through the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Church Age into modern history, including a view of what this community looks like in Bible prophecy.

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Founder
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Tim Sigler, Ph.D.
CEO Ariel Ministries



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